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METHOD FOR DETERMINING THE IGNITION ANGLE

Background Information

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The present invention relates to a method for determining the ignition angle for an internal combustion engine whereby a base ignition angle is determined based on the instantaneous engine speed and load, and as part of a downstream knock control a first ignition angle adjustment in the retard direction is determined when knocking has been detected.

In the development of internal combustion engines, the issues of fuel consumption and exhaust gas emission limits are assuming increasing importance. These operating parameters may be influenced by various measures or manipulated variables, for example exhaust gas recirculation, moving the charge motion control valve, adjusting the camshaft, modifying the valve train, and/or regulating the engine temperature, or regulating the coolant temperature and/or the coolant flow rate. All these manipulated variables also have an influence on the knock limit of the engine, and therefore on the optimum ignition angle as well.

For this reason, the base ignition angle is determined in practice in multiple steps. Based on the instantaneous engine speed and load, an initial ignition angle is first determined. This initial ignition angle is usually read out from an appropriate characteristic map. To determine the base ignition angle, an ignition angle offset is then added to the initial ignition angle for each manipulated variable, i.e., for each of the above-mentioned functionalities, to enable operation of the engine under all operating conditions at the most optimum efficiency. The ignition angle offsets for the individual manipulated variables are usually determined from appropriate characteristic maps as well. The base ignition angle thus determined forms the starting point for a downstream cylinder-specific knock control, thereby allowing

retardation of the base ignition angle when knocking has been detected.

In practice, the above-described method has proven to be
5 problematic in several respects. For manipulated variables
which are calculated using a model, dynamic changes frequently
result in errors in determining the manipulated variable.
This results in erroneous mapping to the corresponding
characteristic map for the ignition angle offset, and results
10 in less than optimum determination of the base ignition angle.
The exhaust gas recirculation rate and the engine temperature
are examples of manipulated variables which may be calculated
using a model. The model calculations for determining the
engine temperature under alternating load or a change in the
15 coolant flow rate and/or coolant temperature have often proven
to be comparatively inaccurate. One reason is the slow
transient phenomena which occur during temperature changes.
In addition, changes in the coolant flow rate have a strong
non-linear effect on the component or engine temperature. It
20 is possible that the known ignition angle pilot control may
not take these circumstances into consideration.

As previously stated, in the known ignition angle pilot
control each manipulated variable requires its own
25 characteristic map for the corresponding ignition angle
offset. As a consequence, the complexity of data recording
and storage increases with the number of manipulated variables
to be considered. Data recording for characteristic maps is
susceptible to errors based on the sheer quantity of data
30 alone. Furthermore, in some cases data recording is also very
time-intensive, such as in the case of the ignition angle
offset resulting from dynamic changes in the engine
temperature, or the coolant flow rate and the coolant
temperature.

Advantages of the Invention

The present invention proposes a method for determining the
5 ignition angle, whereby modifications of manipulated variables
which have an influence on the knock limit and thus on the
optimum ignition angle are dynamically taken into account.

This is achieved according to the present invention by the
10 fact that as part of a knock limit control a second ignition
angle adjustment is determined when at least one manipulated
variable influencing the knock limit changes, the type of the
second ignition angle adjustment, i.e., advancing or
retarding, depending on the manipulated variable and its
15 modification.

In the method according to the present invention, the knock
limit control is triggered by modifications of the manipulated
variables to be taken into account. The absolute value of the
20 manipulated variable is not relevant, so that a manipulated
variable determined in error does not have a negative effect
on the ignition angle determination according to the present
invention as long as, at a minimum, the modification of the
manipulated variable is correctly detected. In addition, in
25 the method according to the present invention, no
characteristic maps are required for determining manipulated
variable-dependent ignition angle offsets. As a result, the
intensive time and memory requirements associated with data
recording for such characteristic maps, as well as the risk of
30 error caused by data recording for these characteristic maps,
are not applicable. With the assistance of knock limit
control, the engine is always operated with an optimum
ignition angle, either at the knock limit or with an ignition
angle specified by the torque structure.

In the method according to the present invention, a clear distinction is made between the known knock control and the knock limit control according to the present invention. Thus, the functionality of the knock control is fully maintained. Aside from several additional release or blocking conditions, to which reference is made in one exemplary embodiment described below, it is possible for the individual functions of the known knock control to be taken over unchanged. In particular, a stationary adaptation of the knock control, which occurs when the engine operating point changes rapidly, may continue unimpaired.

There are basically several possibilities for implementing the method according to the present invention, and in particular for implementing the knock limit control. For example, this may be achieved in the same manner as for knock control, on an individual cylinder basis. In one advantageous variant of the method of the present invention, however, the knock limit control is carried out for all cylinders in the internal combustion engine at the same time and in the same manner. The resulting global adjustment of the ignition angle allows a particularly rapid and efficient adaptation of the ignition angle to a modified knock limit. The ignition angle is regulated on an individual cylinder basis with the assistance of knock control, which is performed in parallel with the knock limit control. In this regard it should be noted that the ignition angle may be retarded as well as advanced as part of knock limit control, whereas knock control is only able to retard the ignition angle.

In the operation of a motor vehicle, situations may arise in which the ignition angle is specified only by the torque structure, and therefore is independent of the knock control

and knock limit control, as is proposed by the present invention. Switching on the air conditioner compressor is mentioned as an example. To avoid jerking of the engine in this case, the torque structure of the engine may form a torque derivative. The ignition angle is thus retarded. During the torque intervention, neither the first ignition angle adjustments determined in the knock control nor the second ignition angle adjustment made in the knock limit control come into use, so that the knock limit control must be interrupted during the torque intervention. After such a torque intervention, the torque derivative is again removed, for example by the ignition angle being ramped up to the knock limit. To determine the appropriate ignition angle, a base ignition angle is first determined, based on the instantaneous engine speed and load, to which an ignition angle adjustment is then added to the knock limit control. The ignition angle adjustment may be determined before the torque intervention, i.e., before the knock limit control is interrupted. However, the thus determined ignition angle represents a good approach to the knock limit only if none of the manipulated variables which influence the knock limit has changed during the torque intervention.

One advantageous variant of the method according to the present invention concerns the case of ignition angle adjustment after a torque intervention, at least one manipulated variable influencing the knock limit having changed during the torque intervention. According to the present invention, it is proposed to read out the value of the ignition angle adjustment for the knock limit control from a characteristic map in which values for this ignition angle adjustment are stored as a function of the engine speed, the load, and the modified manipulated variable. In the ignition angle adjustment, changes in the manipulated variables thus

may also be taken into account after a torque intervention, even though the knock limit control was interrupted during the torque intervention.

5 The values of such a characteristic map may be adaptively determined in an advantageous manner during normal operation of the knock limit control. To this end, initial values for an adaptive characteristic map need be determined only once, and the characteristic map may then be used as an initial
10 characteristic map for all engines of a given type.

Description of the Drawing

As previously described, there are various possibilities for
15 advantageously developing and refining the teaching of the present invention. To this end, reference is made to the subordinate claims to Claim 1 and to the following description of one exemplary embodiment of the present invention, based on the drawing.

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Figure 1 shows a block diagram for explaining the method of the present invention for adjusting the ignition angle during normal engine operation; and

25 Figure 2 shows a block diagram for describing an adaptive characteristic map for knock limit control and for reading out the values from this adaptive characteristic map.

30 Description of the Exemplary Embodiment

A base ignition angle α_1 is determined according to the method of the present invention for determining the ignition angle for an internal combustion engine, based on the instantaneous

engine speed and the load. Base ignition angle 1 may be determined using an appropriate characteristic map, for example. A first ignition angle adjustment 2, which is determined as part of a cylinder-specific knock control 3 when knocking has been detected for a cylinder in the internal combustion engine, is then added to this base ignition angle 1. It is possible for knock control 3 to only cause a retardation of base ignition angle 1. According to the present invention, a second ignition angle adjustment 5 may be determined as part of a knock limit control 4 when at least one manipulated variable changes which influences the knock limit.

Knock limit control 4 may, for example, be actuated by a change in the exhaust gas recirculation rate, an adjustment of the camshaft, the opening or closing of the charge motion control valve, a modification of the valve train, or also by a change in the engine temperature, or a change in the coolant temperature or coolant flow rate. With the assistance of knock limit control 4, the ignition angles are very quickly adapted to the modified knock limit. In one advantageous variant of the method according to the present invention, to this end the ignition angles are adjusted globally, i.e., for all cylinders at the same time and in the same manner. Thus, in this instance only one value is determined for ignition angle adjustment 5 as part of knock limit control 4.

In the method variant illustrated in Figure 1, knock limit control 4 is carried out in parallel with knock control 3, so that the functionality of knock control 3 is independent of knock limit control 4.

Whether ignition angle adjustment 5 determined as part of knock limit control 4 results in an advance or a retardation

of base ignition angle 1 depends on the manipulated variable which triggers knock limit control 4, and by the manner in which this manipulated variable is modified.

5 When the exhaust gas recirculation rate increases, or when the engine temperature decreases, knock limit control 4 causes a global advance of base ignition angle 1 as long as knock control 3 has detected knocking. In this case, knock control 3 remains active and causes the ignition angle for the
10 knocking cylinder to be retarded. If the causative manipulated variable changes further, i.e., if the exhaust gas recirculation rate continues to increase or the engine temperature drops further because the coolant flow rate is increasing or the coolant temperature is decreasing, the
15 ignition angle is further advanced globally after an applicable time until knocking is detected.

If the exhaust gas recirculation rate decreases or the engine temperature rises, knock limit control 4 causes a global
20 retardation of base ignition angle 1 for each knocking instance detected. In this case, both cylinder-specific knock control 3 and a stationary adaptation of the ignition angle are blocked. A simultaneous lowering of the knock detection limit triggers retardation of the ignition angle, even for
25 very minor knocking.

The sum of base ignition angle 1, first ignition angle adjustment 2, and second ignition angle adjustment 5 forms the maximum value of a limiter 6, the latest possible ignition
30 angle 7 being specified as a minimum value for limiter 6. With the assistance of limiter 6, an actual ignition angle 8 is determined by the fact that the range of values of a setpoint ignition angle 9 is delimited.

The block diagram illustrated in Figure 2 concerns the determination of the ignition angle according to the method of the present invention after a torque intervention. When a torque intervention occurs, the ignition angles are specified
5 by the torque structure of the engine. The knock limit control is interrupted. As explained in conjunction with Figure 1, a base ignition angle based on the instantaneous engine speed and load is determined, even after one torque intervention. An ignition angle adjustment in which the
10 influences of one or multiple manipulated variables on the knock limit are taken into account is then added to this base ignition angle. During normal engine operation, this ignition angle adjustment is determined as part of the knock limit control, which, however, is actuated only when one or multiple
15 manipulated variables change(s). Only if none of the manipulated variables has changed during the torque intervention is it possible to approach the knock limit, using the value for the ignition angle adjustment which has been determined before the knock limit control was interrupted.
20 Otherwise, the output ignition angle is either too advanced, resulting in knocks, or too retarded, resulting in a loss of efficiency.

In one advantageous variant of the method according to the
25 present invention, the value for the ignition angle adjustment for knock limit control is read out from a characteristic map when at least one manipulated variable influencing the knock limit has changed during the torque intervention. Values for the ignition angle adjustment are stored in this
30 characteristic map as a function of the engine speed, the load, and the modified manipulated variable.

The condition for reading out a value from such a characteristic map 10 is represented in the right portion of the block diagram illustrated in Figure 2. The left portion

of the block diagram concerns the data recording for this characteristic map 10, which in this instance is performed adaptively during normal operation of the knock limit control. Characteristic map 10 is therefore always referred to below as
5 an adaptive characteristic map.

Values are mapped to adaptive characteristic map 10 for both the description and the readout via the manipulated variable, in this case exhaust gas recirculation rate 11, and via
10 interpolation points 12 as a function of engine speed 13 and load 14. During normal engine operation, each value of the ignition angle adjustment which has been determined as part of the knock limit control is compared to the corresponding value in adaptive characteristic map 10. Only when the difference
15 between these two values exceeds an applicable threshold 15 is the corresponding value in adaptive characteristic map 10 overwritten by the instantaneously determined value for the ignition angle adjustment.

20 As previously stated, two conditions must be satisfied for reading out a value from adaptive characteristic map 10. First, the torque intervention which has caused the knock limit control to be interrupted must be terminated, which is checked at 16. Second, in the illustrated exemplary
25 embodiment the exhaust gas recirculation rate must have significantly changed during the torque intervention. To this end, the difference between the exhaust gas recirculation rate before the torque intervention and the exhaust gas recirculation rate after torque intervention 17 is compared to
30 a predetermined threshold value 18. Only when both conditions have been satisfied is an adapted ignition angle adjustment 19 read out from adaptive characteristic map 10. The ignition angle adjustment may subsequently be redetermined with sufficient accuracy as part of the knock limit control.